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Commission on Population and Development
Forty-fifth session
23-27 April 2012
Item 4 of the provisional agenda*
General debate on national experience in population matters: adolescents and youth

Statement submitted by Salvation Army, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.9/2012/2.

12-22530 (E) 240212

Please recycle

Statement

Introduction

The Salvation Army welcomes the priority theme of the forty-fifth session of the Commission on Population and Development, "Adolescents and youth", and submits the present statement to highlight: (a) the often-overlooked relationship between poverty, youth migration and human trafficking; and (b) the positive role that young people can play in eradicating human trafficking.

The current generation of young people is the largest the world has ever known. According to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, approximately 2 billion of the world's 7 billion people are young people between the ages of 10 and 24, the majority of whom live in developing countries. Many young people of working age are unemployed. While the most powerful predictor of being trafficked as a child is being female, children and youth who are impoverished or marginalized are more susceptible to exploitation, abuse and violence at the hands of unscrupulous traffickers and labour brokers who take advantage of their economic desperation and yearning for a better life. According to data available on the website of the Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking, 98 per cent of victims of forced commercial sexual exploitation and 56 per cent of victims of forced economic exploitation are women and girls. We are concerned that vulnerable youth may be trafficked for sex, domestic servitude, cheap or bonded labour, marriage or organs, and that adolescents and youth who choose to migrate — domestically or internationally — may become vulnerable to trafficking or other forms of exploitation if they cannot secure decent employment in their host communities.

Relationship between poverty, youth migration and human trafficking

The relationship between poverty and trafficking is recognized in a number of international instruments. The Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the guiding document of the Commission, recognized that "[c]hildren in poverty are at high risk for ... falling prey to labour exploitation [and] trafficking", and established as a central principle of human rights-based development the importance of protecting children from "all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sale, trafficking, sexual abuse, and trafficking in its organs".

The international community has recognized human trafficking as an area warranting immediate international action by adopting the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime. Other noteworthy international commitments designed to combat human trafficking include the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the Convention concerning the Abolition of Forced Labour; the Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour; and the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and

Practices Similar to Slavery, which supplements the Slavery Convention. These covenants and conventions are legally binding on the States that are party to them.

It is axiomatic that human trafficking results in myriad civil, political, economic and social rights violations, but it is also driven by human rights violations, such as gender-based discrimination that fuels the demand for commercial sexual exploitation and the lack of access to education, decent work and an adequate standard of living. Adolescents and youth who are already vulnerable because of poverty, minority or orphan status, or who are otherwise marginalized, are at a higher risk of further human rights violations as a result of trafficking.

The role of adolescents and youth as agents of change in eradicating human trafficking

Adolescents and youth, comprising over one fourth of the world's population, have a critical role to play in eradicating human trafficking. Youth participation is a central principle of the human rights regime that governs children's rights. Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child enshrines the fundamental right of children to be heard, including in the context of Government decision-making. As emphasized by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in its general comment No. 12 of the Convention (CRC/C/GC/12), "[c]hildren have increasingly become a powerful force in the prevention of child rights violations" including with respect to "combating child exploitation". The Committee has further recognized that "[c]hildren should be consulted in the formulation of legislation and policy related to ... problem areas and involved in the drafting, development and implementation of related plans and programmes". We note in this regard the enormous potential of adolescents and youth, empowered with knowledge to prevent and respond to human trafficking, to influence their peer groups through informal dialogue, story sharing, peer education and social media to mobilize against modern day slavery in all its forms.

Youth anti-trafficking initiatives undertaken by the Salvation Army highlight the potential of young people as partners in fighting human trafficking. For instance, the Salvation Army has facilitated forums for young people to develop communication strategies to combat human trafficking through creative arts. Through art, youth express their reactions to human trafficking, thereby acknowledging victims in their age groups and strengthening their capacity for peer advocacy responses. We have also facilitated the participation of young people at United Nations events through panel discussions in the areas of the girl child and trafficking. Information about these events is available on our website, and demonstrates the capacity of youth as agents of change.

Policymakers, in collaboration with civil society, should consider how best to give a voice to adolescents and youth who have been victims of and who advocate against human trafficking. We call upon the Commission and Member States to take concrete actions to collaborate with young anti-trafficking advocates in human trafficking awareness campaigns and the development of policy responses. In this connection, we offer the following principles to guide effective youth advocacy strategies:

- Address issues of injustice.
- Design strategies to alter systems.
- Value vulnerable people as agents of change.
- Offer expertise to implement objectives.
- Convince power structures to alter policies.
- Access like-minded people to join the cause.
- Change policies, practices and perceptions.
- Yearn for justice that leads to sustainability.

Recommendations for addressing the trafficking of youth in the context of migration and development

We conclude by recommending actions that the Commission and Member States can take to more effectively address the trafficking of young persons in the context of internal and transnational migration.

Recognize the link between poverty, migration and trafficking

- Make the links between poverty, gender inequality, migration and trafficking explicit in relevant laws, policies and plans of action.
- Develop humane and well-managed migration policies to prevent the exploitation and trafficking of adolescents and youth who migrate within and between countries.
- Provide adolescents and youth with information and resources on safe migration, how to find decent work, dangers to be aware of, whom to contact for help and how to ensure that job offers abroad are safe and genuine.
- Improve monitoring and reporting of internal and transnational trafficking trends. Improved data collection, including disaggregation of migration and trafficking data based on age, gender and nationality, is required to increase collective understanding of human trafficking, adequately protect the rights of young people and develop evidence-based anti-slavery policies.
- Collaborate with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and others to develop an international mechanism to monitor trends and patterns of trafficking in persons, including adolescents and youth.
- Invest in education and training programmes to empower adolescents and youth to become self-sufficient and contribute to their national economies.

Adolescents and youth as agents of change

- Expand opportunities for adolescents and youth to participate in anti-trafficking policy development, implementation and advocacy, for example through youth forums, national youth councils and community-service initiatives.
- Prioritize adolescents and youth in the funding of national and local development programmes.

- Increase awareness and education about human trafficking among vulnerable populations by engaging young people as peer trainers.
- Create space for more active participation of youth at annual sessions of the Commission and in the ongoing work of the Commission.

Note: The statement is endorsed by the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Council: Carmelite NGO, Center for Migration Studies of New York, Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, Congregations of St. Joseph, Franciscans International, Gray Panthers, International Council of Jewish Women, Passionists International, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries, UNANIMA International, United States Federation for Middle East Peace and Zonta International.

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Item 4 of the provisional agenda*
General debate on national experience in population matters: adolescents and youth

Statement submitted by Advocates for Youth, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.9/2012/2.

12-22543 (E) 280212

Please recycle

Statement

Advocates for Youth welcomes the theme of "adolescents and youth" for the forty-fifth session of the Commission on Population and Development. With half the world's population under the age of 25, investing in the health and development of the largest generation in history of young people is an urgent priority now more than ever. We would like to take this opportunity to emphasize the importance of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights for all young people and the vital role young people play when meaningfully engaged in all levels of decision-making.

Advocates for Youth recognizes and upholds the right of adolescents and youth around the world to access information and services related to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health. Advocates for Youth respectfully calls upon Governments to fulfil their responsibility to engage adolescents and youth meaningfully and support programmes and policies that enable them to exercise these rights and make responsible decisions about their sexual and reproductive health.

The Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development recognizes the right of all individuals to decide freely and responsibly on the number, timing and spacing of their children and to have access to the information and means to do so free of discrimination, coercion and violence. Yet more than half the world's youth live in countries with very limited access to sexual and reproductive health-related information and services. Adolescents and youth face particular social, economic, cultural and legal barriers to accessing such services. These unique realities not only increase young people's vulnerability, but also violate their human rights.

Much work remains to adequately address the sexual and reproductive health and rights-related needs of adolescents and youth and to realize the rights espoused at the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in 1994. For example:

- According to the World Health Organization, around the world, 215 million women of reproductive age have an unmet need for contraception and, in some regions of the world, women aged 15 to 19 are two times more likely to have an unmet need for contraception than women in their 20s
- According to the United Nations Population Fund, complications during pregnancy and childbirth are the leading cause of death for girls aged 15 to 19 in developing countries. The Center for Global Development reports that these young women are twice as likely to die during pregnancy or childbirth as those over age 20, while girls under the age of 15 are five times more likely to die than women over age 20
- According to the Population Reference Bureau publication entitled "Unsafe Abortion: Facts and Figures", in developing countries, two in five unsafe abortions occur among women under age 25, and about one in seven women who have an unsafe abortion is under 20
- In sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, more than 30 per cent of young women between the ages of 15 and 19 are married, placing them at greater risk of early pregnancy and other sexual and reproductive health issues (see A/61/122/Add.1)

- In its publication "Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: Data and Trends", the Population Reference Bureau reports that between 100 and 140 million women and girls have undergone female genital mutilation worldwide and 3 million girls are at risk of the procedure each year in Africa
- According to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the United Nations Children's Fund, young people worldwide between the ages of 15 and 24 account for 42 per cent of all new HIV infections among people over 15, with young women accounting for 64 per cent of the new infections among youth
- Also according to UNAIDS, globally, only 34 per cent of young people can answer correctly five basic questions about HIV and how to prevent it

Adolescents and youth around the world are facing unintended pregnancy, complications from too-early childbearing, unsafe abortion, harmful traditional practices, HIV infection and gender-based violence. These realities are unacceptable, and adolescents and youth have a right to be healthy and live free from violence and coercion. We demand immediate action in accordance with the recommendations below.

Youth involvement

Ensure that adolescents and youth, including adolescent girls, in and out of school, married, disabled, rural, marginalized, displaced and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth, are actively and meaningfully involved at every decision-making level, including in the planning, implementation and evaluation of programmes and policies that impact their lives. In order to be meaningfully engaged, Governments must promote and provide capacity-building opportunities, including financial and technical support that would allow young people to become not only the leaders of tomorrow, but also the leaders of today. In addition to country support for the meaningful engagement of youth, it is also imperative that United Nations agencies, funds and programmes continue to promote meaningful partnerships with youth at the national and international levels.

Comprehensive sexuality education

Provide age-appropriate, medically accurate, evidence- and rights-based comprehensive sexuality education for all in and out of school, disabled and displaced adolescents and youth, with effective referrals to confidential youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services. Sexuality education curricula must promote gender equity, be scientifically sound, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender-inclusive. Such curricula must go beyond biology and include information about sexuality; sexual and reproductive health; abstinence; condoms and contraception; healthy relationships; the prevention of gender-based violence, stigma and discrimination; healthy emotive processes; good communication; and human rights.

Comprehensive sexuality education curricula should create safe and judgment-free environments for young people to learn and build their skills to make healthy and informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive lives. In order to achieve this, Governments must also invest in building a cadre of adequately trained

teachers, provide ongoing technical support on how to deliver high-quality comprehensive sexuality education and evaluate achievement of learning objectives.

Youth-friendly services

Ensure that every young person has access to the full range of youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services that are confidential, affordable and respectful of young people's rights to privacy and informed consent. Youth-friendly services must include unconditional access to evidence- and rights-based comprehensive sexuality education and counselling; prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV; a full range of safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of modern contraception and family planning services and commodities, including emergency contraception and male and female condoms; pre- and post-natal care, including skilled birth attendance and emergency obstetric care; and prevention and treatment of gender-based violence and sexual abuse and safe and legal abortion services, including post-abortion care. When designing sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS programmes and services for adolescents and youth, Governments must ensure that they are customized, integrated and based on best practices and young people's expressed needs, especially the needs of young people living with HIV and AIDS. In addition to comprehensive information and services, health professionals working with young people must receive adequate training and support to enable them to provide information and services in a judgment-free environment with full respect for young people's rights to privacy, confidentiality and informed consent. Country Governments must also ensure that communities, parents and guardians are educated and able to provide effective guidance and support to adolescents and youth.

Legal and sociocultural barriers

Ensure that laws, regulations and policies remove obstacles and barriers that infringe on the sexual and reproductive health and rights of adolescents and youth. This includes rescinding requirements for parental and spousal notification and/or consent, age of consent, mandatory waiting periods and laws and regulations that permit violence and discrimination against young women and men, married adolescents, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth and other marginalized young people. In addition, Governments should promote policies and programmes that eliminate harmful traditional practices, such as early and forced marriage, rape, gender-based violence, female genital cutting/mutilation and all other forms of violence against adolescent girls and young women.

Youth diversity

Respect the diversity of all young people, and protect and promote their universal human rights and fundamental freedoms regardless of age, race, ethnicity, sex, marital status, sexual orientation and gender identity, HIV status, religious or political affiliation, ability, education level and experience. Promote and support youth-specific research, age- and gender-disaggregated data, and the development of programmes and policies, together with young people, that take the diversity of adolescents and youth into account.

All adolescents and youth have a right to sexual and reproductive health, to live free from violence and coercion and to exercise their sexual and reproductive rights. Youth involvement, comprehensive sexuality education, youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services, an enabling legal and sociocultural environment and the recognition of youth diversity are critical to ensuring a world where young people lead healthy lives and where sexuality and reproductive health are positive and enjoyable aspects of being human.

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General debate on national experience in population matters: adolescents and youth

Statement submitted by Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.9/2012/2.

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Please recycle

Statement

The Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women was formally established in 1993 as a regional non-profit and non-governmental organization concerned with ensuring that development policies and plans influencing women's health status included women's and gender perspectives. The vision of the organization is for women and young people in Asia and the Pacific to be better able to define and control their lives, particularly in the area of health and sexuality. Since 1993, it has been able to make significant progress towards this vision. The organization recognizes the importance of working with young people, especially to ensure that the voices of young women and girls are taken into account within the decision-making, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes.

Young people today are living in a world where the opposition to sexual and reproductive health rights builds from strength to strength by handing down resources, experience and institutional support from generation to generation; the progressive advocates of the sexual and reproductive health rights movement have yet to achieve effective, sustained and reliable transition systems of the next line of leadership development.

Young people today are the largest population of young people in human history. Worldwide, the number of youth increased from 461 million in 1950 to 1.21 billion in 2010. Currently, Asia has the largest number of youths, which comprises 754 million. According to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, their number has almost tripled since 1950. Unfortunately, young people today also face multilayered problems. Every five minutes a young person commits suicide, often due to emotional and social problems related to sexual and reproductive health, such as sexual violence and the breakdown of relationships. On top of that, the South-East Asian and Pacific regions have the second highest HIV prevalence rates, with about 1.27 million young people living with HIV.

There is also the issue of access by young people, especially young girls, to comprehensive information in regard to sexual and reproductive health and rights. National surveys conducted in 2009 found that 40 per cent of young males (ages 15-24) and 36 per cent of young females had accurate knowledge regarding HIV — still well below the 95 per cent goal for young people's HIV knowledge unanimously endorsed by Member States in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS. Young girls in the region are faced with the politics of gender inequality, puberty, and parental and marriage consent, which pose further challenges to obtaining accurate and reliable information about their own bodies and sexuality.

The organization analysed the progress achieved in 12 Asian countries in respect of the 15-year review of the International Conference on Population and Development and found the progress on imparting sex education and sexuality education to adolescents to be uneven and sketchy. Less than 30 per cent of the countries have made attempts to introduce sex education into the curriculum, although more countries claim that some aspect of sex education is integrated within existing subjects in the present curriculum.

In addition, in most countries unmarried young people still face many barriers, some legal, some socially discriminatory, to accessing the sexual and reproductive health services. It is clear from the lack of provision of education, information and services to young people who are in dire need of these that Governments in the

region are hesitant to recognize the role of sexuality beyond its function in reproduction.

Most young people become sexually active by the age of 20, however their access to contraception information and services is low. The lack of access to contraception and safe abortion services puts young women and girls at risk of unsafe abortions aggravating their health risks. Furthermore, there is a lack of disaggregated reliable data on the unmet need for contraception among young people.

Youth employability, basic livelihood and entrepreneurship have become the main targets for the international donor community in giving financial support for and in investing in young people's issues. This is at the expense of the issues of young people's gender equality, human rights and health (especially sexual and reproductive health and rights, which include HIV/AIDS), which are sidelined from the priorities. On top of that, according to research conducted by the Association for Women's Rights in Development, the need for funds to support initiatives that address issues related to young women and girls has doubled, and accessing sustainable funding has become a major barrier. Furthermore, the South-East Asia subregion accounts for only 2 per cent of overall projects implemented for advancing the leadership mobilization of young women and girls. Financing young people's issues is still perceived as a luxury.

In recognition of these facts, the organization has invested in the development of a young people's advocacy partnership project on sexual and reproductive health rights, the Women's Health and Rights Advocacy Partnership in South-East Asia.[1] Initiated in 2009 and focusing on the issues of young people, HIV and education, the Partnership has generated advocacy around young people's access to comprehensive sexuality education, which is defined and led by grass-roots youth activists from marginalized communities of young people, including from Myanmar (Burma Medical Association, the Migrants Action Programme and the Myanmar Positive Women's Network); Cambodia (Reproductive Health Association of Cambodia); China (Yunnan Health and Development Research Association); Indonesia (Yayasan Jurnal Perempuan); the Lao People's Democratic Republic (University of Health Sciences); the Philippines (Likhaan); and Viet Nam (Centre for Creative Initiatives in Health and Population).

Some initial results include the successful mobilization of local youth to mainstream young people's sexual and reproductive health rights — issues related to community council priority issues in Siem Riep, Cambodia, which has enabled young people, especially young women, to enjoy free services in public clinics. It has also led to the creation of the first ethnic group leadership network for young women of the Jingpo people along the China-Myanmar border, which addresses the urgent need to include young women and girls in issues related to harm reduction

[1] The Women's Health and Rights Advocacy Partnership in South-East Asia initiative is part of a wider strategy of the Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women that aims to create international partnerships for advocacy across the Asia-Pacific region. Initially implemented in the South Asian subregion, it now reaches out to over 247,780 marginalized women and girls, through 140 community-based organizations, working through 18 national partner organizations across 14 countries in the Asia-Pacific region. The critical contribution of a regional partnership platform is the capacity to create an advocacy entity that is, by its collective nature, larger than any one in-country or regional partner alone.

intervention; to discussion about pleasure and virginity and the relationship to religious fundamentalism among young people in Indonesia as a step to create the largest youth network on sexual and reproductive health rights; to attaining young factory workers rights in Viet Nam, in respect of upholding their sexual rights, through their workers' rights movement; and to the mobilization of 180 cross-sector youth networks in the Philippines aimed at asking for a reproductive and health rights bill to address the needs of young people and adolescents in this regard.

The initiative's regional youth advocacy interventions have resulted in an increased presence of non-English-speaking youth leadership in a number of international and regional conferences, putting forth advocacy evidence and arguments that are grounded in the realities of the youth activists and their grass-roots constituencies. This is clearly an added value to the present youth leadership in sexual and reproductive health and rights, which tends to be more English-speaking and not always representative of communities of marginalized youth. Some immediate benefits of creating the advocacy platform for youth advocates, especially young women activists, have included mobilization and advocacy in regional and national forums.

Learning from our partners' work on the ground and evidence about the sexual and reproductive health and rights of young people in the region, we call upon Member States to recognize the universality of sexual and reproductive health and rights, with a focus on young people (including adolescents). We believe that Member States must:

- Invest in innovative funding schemes to support placing the sexual and reproductive health and rights of young women and girls at the centre of development priorities. Giving direct support to women's organizations and collectives and young people's initiatives promotes ample long-term support in advancing social change and equity.
- Move beyond meaningful participation towards creation of a systemic platform to support leadership by young people, especially young women and girls.
- Understand the multiple layers of marginalization and representation by specifically focusing on the diversity of young people, including young women and girls; young people living with HIV/AIDS; young migrant workers; young people who are lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/intersexed/questioning; young sex workers; young people who use drugs; and other young people who are denied their sexual and reproductive rights.
- Institutionalize universal comprehensive, gender-sensitive and evidence-based sexuality education curricula that enable young people (including adolescents) to make informed choices about their sexual and reproductive health and rights, and provide such comprehensive sexuality education in formal settings of schools and informal settings of communities. Furthermore, this comprehensive sexuality education is embedded in a human rights framework, which includes rights to be free from discrimination, coercion and violence, and rights based on positive ethical principles of bodily integrity, personhood, equality and respect for diversity that portrays sexuality in an affirmative way.
- Provide youth-friendly services to enable young people, especially young women and girls, to enjoy the full range of sexual and reproductive health services. This includes counselling, information, education, contraception

services, prenatal care, safe delivery and post-natal care, safe abortion services, including prevention and management of the consequences of abortion, the treatment of reproductive tract infections, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS-related services and voluntary counselling and testing.

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General debate on national experience in population matters: adolescents and youth

Statement submitted by Action Canada for Population and Development, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.9/2012/2.

12-22756 (E) 060312

Please recycle

Statement

The present statement is submitted by Action Canada for Population and Development, a non-profit advocacy organization that seeks to enhance the quality of life of women, men and children by promoting progressive policies in the field of human rights and international development with a primary focus on reproductive and sexual rights and health.

The theme of the forty-fifth session of the Commission on Population and Development, "Adolescents and youth", comes at an urgent time. We recognize that while there has been progress in delivering on the commitments of the Cairo Programme of Action and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, there is still an urgent need to scale up progress towards respecting, protecting and promoting young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights in policies and programmes.

This forty-fifth session of the Commission is an incredible opportunity for the world's Governments to recommit to young people's human rights, health and well-being. The fulfilment of young people's human rights has been hampered by the limited realization of their sexual and reproductive health needs and rights and so we urge Governments to deeply reflect and commit to young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights in the outcomes of this session.

During this session, we urge Governments to pay special attention to the sexual and reproductive health and rights of adolescent girls and young women. Gender inequality has a profound impact on the health, lives and well-being of adolescent girls and young women, who remain one of the most marginalized groups in many aspects of the development agenda, including in employment, health and access to education and in being recognized as rights-holders. A lack of research and programmes that address the particular needs of adolescent girls and young women has further pushed them to the margins of society and denied them basic human rights. As Governments have already reaffirmed, gender equality cannot be achieved without promoting and protecting the rights of women, including young women. Gender equality is an essential component to enjoying the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, which cannot happen without expanding access to sexual and reproductive health information and services and protecting human rights.

We thus urge Governments to stand by their commitment to ensuring that young people, especially adolescent girls and young women, have universal access to sexual and reproductive health services. This includes access to information and comprehensive sexuality education that will empower young women and girls with the tools to make the best choices for themselves. It is about access to modern contraceptives and sexual and reproductive health services free from legal barriers, stigma, discrimination and coercion. It is about providing us with the resources to make informed and responsible choices about our health and lives. It is about access to safe abortion services that embrace and respect our bodily integrity, autonomy, freedom and dignity.

In many parts of the world, a combination of social taboos, unavailability of sound information and lack of resources and infrastructure make it difficult for children and young people to access sexuality education aimed at improving knowledge and reducing risk. This leaves many young people vulnerable to

coercion, abuse, exploitation, unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.

Youth-friendly comprehensive sexuality education must be part of all formal school curricula, ensuring that young people have adequate, science-based, comprehensive information about gender roles, gender equality, sexuality, relationships, negotiation skills, sexual diversity, sexually transmitted infection and HIV prevention and human anatomy, among other topics. Providing this information allows girls and young women to make informed decisions about their bodies and their lives. There is no need to reinvent the wheel: best practices already exist, including some that are gathered in the publication entitled "International technical guidance on sexuality education", published by the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization in partnership with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Health Organization (WHO). Comprehensive sexuality education must be combined with access to sexual and reproductive health and rights services for youth, including modern and affordable contraception, in order to empower young people with the right to make autonomous and responsible decisions.

Alongside access to modern and affordable contraception, young women need safe and legal access to abortion services. The lack of access to abortion services is a concern, as indicated in the 2011 report of the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, and the impact on adolescent girls' lives and health has been addressed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

According to the publication by WHO entitled *Unsafe Abortion: Global and Regional Estimates of the Incidence of Unsafe Abortion and Associated Mortality in 2008*, research has shown that legal restrictions on abortion do not lower the number of abortions but rather increase the risks of maternal mortality and morbidity owing to unsafe abortions carried out in clandestine and unhygienic environments by unskilled attendants. The consequences of such abortions are often more appalling for adolescent girls and young women given the legal, social and cultural barriers and the abortion-related stigma that limits their access to sexual and reproductive health services.

We urge Governments and other stakeholders to highlight the importance of including access to abortion services by removing legal restrictions on access to safe and affordable abortion services, facilitating an essential intervention towards achieving the goals indicated in the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, as well as those reinforced in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals.

Unless it addresses these critical issues, any policy outcome of the session will be an unsuccessful attempt at addressing the needs, realities and rights of adolescents and young people. Therefore, we urge Member States to take into account the gravity of this situation and urge the international community:

- To recognize girls, young women and young men as rights-holders and protect and uphold their human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights and health.

- To recognize the evolving capacity of young people, including women and girls, for making autonomous and responsible decisions about their bodies and lives.
- To recognize that the provision of affordable, safe and legal abortion services along with comprehensive sexuality education, access to modern contraceptive methods and gender-sensitive youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services will bring better health outcomes among adolescent girls and young women.
- To establish rights-based policies that are evidence-based, address the realities of adolescent girls and young women in their countries and promote equitable, peaceful and just societies.
- To ensure adequate financial resources for programmes and interventions that safeguard and advance young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- To ensure the meaningful participation of a diverse group of young people in all programmes, policies and interventions since that is essential to ensuring that sexual and reproductive health and rights programmes and policies address the realities, concerns and priorities of all young people.

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General debate on national experience in population matters: adolescents and youth

Statement submitted by World Mission Foundation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.9/2012/2.

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Please recycle

Statement

The major goals of World Mission Foundation are to contribute to the Millennium Development Goals on poverty, global health and social development, to transform policies into action among African immigrants and other minorities and to reflect a commitment to the sexual well-being of adolescents and youth. It also works to inculcate in adolescents and youth the power to make moral decisions about their reproductive and sexual health.

Through its global project on health, My Sisters' Health Initiative, World Mission Foundation works with networks in Africa, the Caribbean and the United States of America to address social issues, HIV/AIDS and health care in respect of adolescents and youth in Africa and adolescents and youth of African descent. World Mission Foundation urges advocacy on health and social issues for African nations as well as the need to implement policies on improved health and programmes that will reach rural communities, including on HIV/AIDS and other health issues affecting women, youth, adolescents, families and children.

The organization is also committed to implementing the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Millennium Development Goals.

The organization has developed the following projects:

(a) **Window of Hope**. An educational enrichment programme for schools and colleges that has introduced health-care clubs in post-primary schools, focusing on education about reproductive and sexual health and HIV/AIDS. Youths are mentored so that they can tell their stories and experiences in shared forums, through drama and talking points, as well as exhibit creative traits in disseminating information;

(b) **World Mission Foundation Brain Education Youth Opportunity project**. A global network for adolescents and youth to help them to develop models/documents that contain practical guidelines on reproductive issues, targeting adolescents and youth across the nations of Africa and adolescents and youth of African descent. This is achieved through the interactive approach of the social media networks.

Characterizing adolescents and youth in the Programme of Action and the Millennium Development Goals

The period of adolescence and youth is a period of human development that occurs between childhood and adulthood, and between puberty and maturity. Physical, psychological, physiological and emotional changes are characteristic of the period. It is also a period of struggle, when adolescents and youth move out of childhood into responsible adulthood while developing a personality. In most countries, this period extends from 13 to 18 years of age in girls and from 14 to 18 years of age in boys. During these years, physical and sexual maturity occur, and sexual characteristics and behaviour develop, resulting in male and female sexuality and roles. The reproductive organs of girls begin to develop, as evident in their monthly cycles, while changes occur in male voices and their shoulders gradually become more broad. Adolescents also strive to search for emotional, social and behavioural independence, want to communicate and be with their peers and achieve

self-development. In this period, adolescents and youth also experience confusion, seek explanations and search for knowledge while working on their sense of personal identity.

They encounter emotional turmoil due to hormonal stress and the quest to attain sexual and physical maturity. During this period, adolescents and youth focus on their capabilities, strengths and needs; it is also a period in which reproductive/sexual issues, including teen pregnancies, HIV/AIDS and sexual violence, are of greatest concern. In 1994, the International Conference on Population and Development addressed diverse needs in the area of adolescent reproductive health. Chapter VII of the Programme of Action has a section devoted to adolescents, with the objectives (7.44) of addressing adolescent sexual and reproductive health issues, and substantially reducing all adolescent pregnancies. Countries, with the support of the international community, are urged to protect and promote the rights of adolescents to reproductive health education, information and care (7.46), and Governments, in collaboration with non-governmental organizations, are urged to meet with the special needs of adolescents and to establish appropriate programmes to respond to those needs (7.47). The following should be made available and accessible to adolescents and youth: access to reproductive and sexual health services including family planning; family-planning counselling; prenatal care; safe delivery and postnatal care; prevention and appropriate treatment of infertility; prevention and management of the consequences of abortion; treatment of reproductive tract infections, sexually transmitted diseases and other reproductive health conditions; and education and counselling relevant to human sexuality, reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and infertility. Both the Programme of Action and the Millennium Development Goals called for unfettered universal access to family planning methods to support integrated, comprehensive programmes that holistically address the reproductive and sexual health of adolescents.

Strategic framework of commitment on reproductive and sexual health issues for adolescents and youth

Adolescents and youth comprise about 1.8 billion of the world's population. This huge population deserves an education that will enable it to understand the realities of their existing environment and the world. Education needs to be provided to adolescents and youth on developmental issues concerning their reproductive and sexual rights as part of collective global and sustainable efforts to meet the demands of the Programme of Action and the Goals. This group needs to be encouraged, by trusting their views with respect to reproductive and sexual health, and population growth, and they need to be provided with successful awareness models that will strengthen their abilities to meet life's challenges.

The strategic framework of commitment on reproductive and sexual health for adolescents and youth in the context of the Programme of Action and the Goals should focus on education, social investments, a rights-based approach, gender perspectives and joint programmes that will allow for an integrated approach to achieving the Programme of Action and the Goals.

Recommendations

We recommend the following:

(a) Promoting the reproductive and sexual health and rights of adolescents and youth. Reproduction is both a private and public matter yet it also concerns public health. Education and awareness programmes that promote curricula dealing with global concerns should include such issues as sexuality, HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancies, gender-based violence, puberty, gender-based reproductive rights, personal development, peer education and mentorship skills;

(b) Extending the same education and awareness programmes in communities to adolescents and youth who are out of school. Rural and community support centres should be established to encourage partnerships and collaborative efforts through integrated approaches between the community, non-governmental organizations and international agencies;

(c) Accelerating the involvement of all stakeholders. It is important to get the international community, Governments, policymakers, civil society and non-governmental organizations involved in enhancing investments in gender responsiveness and social protection in respect of reproductive issues, sexuality and population concerns;

(d) The Commission on Population and Development should utilize its collective voice to raise awareness of the importance of a development approach to the reproductive rights of adolescents and youth and on population protection initiatives; to influence policy discussions in this regard; and to work on capacity-building activities;

(e) The Commission should extend its individual, corporate and non-governmental organization networks at all levels to promote greater and improved access to use of reproductive commodities that will prevent health-related concerns such as HIV/AIDS and other related infections, unwanted pregnancies and abortions;

(f) The Commission should remind the world that the reproductive and sexual health of adolescents and youth and the related education thereon constitute not only a right but also:

(i) A path to global sustainable development;

(ii) A necessary component to achieving the goals of the Programme of Action and the Millennium Development Goals and the agenda concerning the world's population of 7 billion;

(g) The Commission, in collaboration with civil society, non-governmental organizations and other groups, should take a leadership role in promoting reproductive, sexuality and population programmes for adolescents and youth;

(h) Developing a comprehensive strategic communication package, which would address the behavioural changes in adolescents and youth and include communication strategies relevant to their personality development, including from gender and cultural perspectives. Special attention should be focused on peer communication empowerment strategies for adolescents and youth;

(i) Fostering ethically based approaches that will enable adolescents and youth to develop their potentials, identities and mental and life skills while working with their rights;

(j) Recognizing the significant need to provide reproductive and sexual health services and to address the accessibility and affordability of these at all levels.

In conclusion, through its My Sisters' Health Initiative, World Mission Foundation would like to reaffirm its overall global and regional commitments to partner with the Commission in developing a comprehensive approach and a successful curriculum model for adolescents and youth of African descent on reproductive, and sexual health education, including population issues.

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Commission on Population and Development
Forty-fifth session
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Item 4 of the provisional agenda*
General debate on national experience in population matters: adolescents and youth

Statement submitted by International Planned Parenthood Federation (Africa region), a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.9/2012/2.

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Statement

In Africa, young people aged 15 and under form almost 46 per cent of the entire population. This signifies that Africa is a fast-growing young population with an ever-increasing demand for sexual reproductive health services to meet its needs. It is common knowledge that young people are the future and that what happens to them today will determine what becomes of their communities and societies in the decades ahead. Significant barriers frequently deter African youth from obtaining urgently needed sexual health services. In many countries, millions of young people are deprived of their most basic rights to shelter, health, education, appropriate contraception and sexual and reproductive health services. They also stand in the path of one of the deadliest epidemics ever: HIV/AIDS. The statistics indicate that:

- Every day, about 6,000 young people aged 15 to 24 become infected with HIV, globally accounting for half of all new infections
- An estimated 11.8 million young people (7.3 million young women and 4.5 million young men) were living with HIV/AIDS at the end of 2001

Young people are disproportionately affected by the HIV pandemic and remain at the centre of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in terms of rates of infection, vulnerability, impact and potential for change. They face the economic and social impact of HIV/AIDS on families, communities and nations.

Access to youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services

International Planned Parenthood Federation (Africa region) is a youth-serving organization providing quality sexual and reproductive health and HIV services to the community, mainly young people, in a rights-based manner. It has vast experience, reach and influence in such areas as the sexual and reproductive health and human rights of youth, and capacity-building in youth leadership, advocacy and management. At the regional level, the organization is present in 42 countries through a network of member associations that advocate for and provide quality sexual and reproductive health and HIV services to communities, mainly young people. The organization believes that investments in young people as a new generation of leadership can yield gains in addressing the gaps and challenges of accessing quality sexual and reproductive health and HIV services. It supports meaningful youth participation in the design, delivery and governance of sexual and reproductive health and HIV programmes through an organized youth action movement structure. The members of the movement and other youth volunteers constitute a considerable force in supporting the establishment of over 100 youth-friendly clinics and centres, where young people can access appropriate, gender-sensitive and youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services. The members and volunteers also provide a critical mass of young people who are well versed in counselling and facilitating training for other young people in communities on issues of sexual reproductive health and rights. As a pioneer of comprehensive sexuality education for youth in and out of school, the organization continues to engage schools, larger communities and partner organizations in capacity-building on sexuality education to build healthful behaviours. Condom distribution is central to the work of the organization. Condoms and other contraceptives are accessible to young people through a community-based distribution system, static and mobile clinics and placements in strategic access points.

International Planned Parenthood Federation (Africa region) believes in evidence-based programming. Research is instrumental in bringing about innovation, in providing new information in the fight against HIV and AIDS, and in reporting. Effective and focused materials that adopt the information, education and communication method or the behaviour change communication method have been developed with young people in mind. Where young people are well informed of HIV risks and prevention strategies, they are changing their behaviour in ways that reduce their vulnerability. For example, in Togo, targeted sexuality education has led to delayed sexual debut and the increased use of condoms, resulting in a decrease in HIV prevalence among young people. Health services provided by the member associations of the International Planned Parenthood Federation are very affordable, cater to minors or unmarried adults and provide treatment for sexually transmitted infections. International Planned Parenthood Federation makes special efforts to recognize and respect the social, sexual and economic diversities of young people and provides a platform to cater to the needs of different minority groups, such as young sex workers; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex migrant youth; and young people in emergency situations. Peer education and the provision of special sexual and reproductive health and HIV packages for emergency situations is essential in this.

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Statement submitted by Misión Mujer, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

Ten recommendations to enhance public policies on and investment in risk prevention among adolescents

Adolescence, one of life's most complex and most fascinating stages, is typically a period of change, vulnerability and opportunity. Physical and emotional changes; the quest for independence and identity; the formation of relationships beyond the nuclear family; the beginnings of awareness and experience of sexuality; and concern about readiness for employment — all these take place during this phase. The adolescent (between the ages of 12 and 19) makes a clean break with the security, behaviours and values of childhood and starts to build for him or herself a new world that is his or her own. In order to do so, the adolescent still needs support: from the family, from school and from society, since adolescence remains a learning phase.

We define adolescents as women and men with specific needs, which must be addressed in order to produce human capital that can be transformed in a positive way at the personal, family, community and country levels, bringing about sustainable economic development and a commitment to society and values in order to transform the environment. However, given that adolescence constitutes the intermediate stage between childhood and youth, there is a dearth of specific policies aimed exclusively at adolescence.

The protection of the human rights of adolescents is in line with respect for their dignity as persons and their ability to participate in improving their society. The evidence provided by social research indicates that there is an important link between access to health care and education and economic growth in a country. Investing in human capital to improve access to preventive health care, and educational coverage and quality lead to a more capable and productive adolescent population with greater potential for economic and social development. This type of action reduces the social cost of palliative measures (social rehabilitation centres, costs related to maternal and child health and addictions and low productivity, among others), in addition to reducing poverty and inequality.

Against this backdrop, Misión Mujer proposes 10 recommendations for enhancing public policies and investment in risk prevention among adolescents:

- Introduce a positive image of adolescents, derived from the Convention on the Rights of the Child, that recognizes them as persons with dignity that constitute the human capital of a country. Replace the perception of adolescence as synonymous with antisocial and psychological pathology with one that embraces, supports and motivates the adolescent, encouraging successful experiences in which they are the key actors.
- Promote and support adolescents in developing a life plan in line with their aspirations, needs and environment, offering them opportunities for study, health care, job training and cultural and social development that allow them to enhance their quality of life and shared responsibility in society.
- Acknowledge the importance of adolescent participation in various processes, involving them in the design, follow-up, implementation and evaluation of public policies that concern them, promote their empowerment through

committed participation in activities aimed at ecological conservation, social progress, legal decisions that concern them, democratic participation in the country, in academic life through student councils and assemblies, cultural and sporting activities and in civil society and volunteer organizations.

- Promote freedom with responsibility in a way that recognizes adolescence as a process of ascent through interdependence and autonomy, encouraging adolescents to use their freedom responsibly, making them aware of the consequences of their actions and committing themselves to respect the freedom of others.

- Prioritize the creation and operation of psychosocial risk-prevention programmes for adolescents based on life skills. The World Health Organization itself suggests that such programmes can help promote health and self-care, prevent psychosocial problems (violence, addictions, early sexual activity and adolescent pregnancy, among others). These programmes also favour adolescent participation in society, their inclusion in the community and the quest to achieve quality education and sustainable human development.

- Promote support for the family and school as necessary forums for the protection and development of adolescents. Several studies on the factors that protect at-risk adolescents from early sex, violence and drug abuse show that adolescents who come from broken homes are more vulnerable to these risks, hence the urgent need to promote actions to strengthen the family as one of those factors. School also provides an ideal opportunity to protect and gain leverage with adolescents; it empowers the student to know, understand and better himself, and to possess the skills needed to enter the workforce in the near future.

- Include not only professionals and resources but also persons closely involved with the comprehensive development and socialization of youth in every community in the process of determining public policies and coordinating efforts aimed at adolescents. A key element in increasing the effectiveness of these programmes is the activation of networks for the protection of adolescents, in which families, schools, civil society organizations, businesses, authorities and anyone who is in any way involved with adolescents collaborate on a joint project in order to reduce the risk factors that affect the adolescents in a given community.

- Plan strategies to protect the sexual and reproductive health of adolescents, where the chief recommendation would be to encourage delaying the start of sexual relations, given that sexual contact is considered risk behaviour for this age group by public health authorities (recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of the United States of America and WHO), as condoms reduce but do not eliminate the risk of contracting infections. On this subject, it is important to conduct additional research and raise awareness about the sexualization of adolescent women and men in their social context, which has harmful emotional and psychological effects, leads to diminished cognitive abilities and educational performance, harms the development of healthy relationships and incites violence, in particular violence against women, in addition to reinforcing stereotypes that result in low self-esteem and depression, among other conditions.

- Pay special attention to the issue of adolescent mental health, given that there is presently great demand for a forum (such as that provided by the Axios programme) where adolescents can be heard and receive psychological care and, in the event that a serious problem is detected, a referral to the relevant entity. Few such services are available; it is thus important to invest in the revitalization or establishment, as necessary, of child psychology offices in every school at the municipal, state and national level with the goal of increasing coverage of the population.

- Allocate substantial resources for the promotion, construction and maintenance of sports, cultural, artistic, recreational or workshop-based activities, with self-sustaining models at moderate feeds or free of charge in order to promote participation in those activities and thereby effectively reduce psychosocial risk among adolescents.